

Dishonesty in the crucible

Literature, American Literature



This mistrust in the town occurs due to the random accusations of witchcraft flying through the town, the inhabitants are weary that a close friend may incriminate them and they will be led to the gallows. The Reverend Hale notices this lack of trust in Salem as he enters the household with Francis and Giles he states, ' There is a misty plot afoot so subtle we should be criminal to cling to old respect and ancient friendships'. Hale is saying that old friends do not matter any more as they have followed the easy route of lying to achieve what they want and loyalties do not enter their plan to accomplish more land or any other trivial matters.

Accusations run free in Salem not distinguishing one person from the next, respect does not come into play.

The lack of trust follows to the dishonesty in the play people began to see the rampant accusations of the trials as a chance to use this hysteria to benefit themselves, and began to accuse an easy target as the person who is engaging in witchcraft.

Abigail Williams accused who servant Tituba of witchcraft as she was a black slave to her family and no one would believe her over a white niece of a reverend due to the racist attitudes that existed. Abigail also accused the poor as they were not rated as important members in the community, they had no status so were an easy target. Abigail was the one who triggered the feast of lies but it did not end here.

Thomas Putnam engaged in the fabrication also but the alleged was on a more personal note. He was involved in a dispute with Giles Corey over a section of land and he saw a chance to stop the argument and accuse Corey

of witchcraft which had him imprisoned and Putnam free to take the land without any resistance against him. This dishonesty was occurring before the trials began in the marriage of John and Elizabeth Proctor.

This occurs as John, for several months concealed his infidelity from his wife who was ill at the time. This moment of dishonesty demolished their relationship to such ruins that seven months afterwards the foundations on which their marriage was built began to disintegrate due to the hypocrisy that occurred. It caused chaos, disruption and suffering to the community and to people's lives as now children were left alone with their land being seized. Nobody knew what to do.

After this dishonesty followed the trials as the trials in Salem mirrored what was going on America in the time this play was written. This was the McCarthyism, trials which occurred in the 1950's. A widespread search led by Joseph McCarthy for those who supported or sympathised with Communism, a philosophy throughout the USSR (United Soviet Republic) and was a great fear and seen as a threat to the American government.

As it is a large capitalist country in which they focused on making profits. They feared that the dominating power may ignite non-American attitudes. Arthur Miller was put in trial for being a communist this parallel to what happens in the play as both Elizabeth and John Proctor are put on trial for being allegedly engaging in witchcraft to attack fellow townspeople. This is shown as both the Proctor and Miller was asked to name those who were involved in the deed. A trial is usually when someone has to prove their innocence when a case is up against them. The trial in Salem parallels the

trial Miller went through as they both refused to tell who is involved in the crime and are caught in a wildfire of accusations, at this was the peak of the McCarthy trials and the witchcraft trials which Proctor and Miller were drawn in to.

The last of the parallels was the dignity that followed in the marriage and the trial. As this is evident in the last two acts of the novella. This is shown as they both, in able to save one another goes against themselves and the poise that Proctor goes to the gallows with. In Act three when asked to inform the court of why she dismissed Abigail she lies and says, ' my husband is a god and righteous man'. Her husband who committed adultery she lies for him. Then when inquired again if he did turn from her(commit fornication) she says no to Danforth. She lies which is against her as lying in this puritan time was also seen as a great sin. Her lying for him does not help as in an attempt to save himself he previously admitted that he had an affair with Abigail Williams but this does not help him as they still sentence him to death even though he confessed to his sin.

He is offered a chance to save himself but refuses to sign his name to be hung on the church door saying,' God does not need to see my name nailed upon a church. He knows how black my sins are' also he goes on to say ' I have given you my soul, leave me my name' knowing that his name would be infamous throughout the area if he signed the document. If he should die he wants to have something to pass on through his generations, rather than to blacken his future generations. In the last act Corey is said to of said the Lord's Prayer just before his death, this is very significant and poignant

scene in the film adaptation. This is to save his soul from damnation and is asking for forgiveness

John and Elizabeth pass through the end of the play John Proctor dies but he passes through the crucible. A crucible is something used to extract pure from impure. Such as it begins with the suspicion, which Elizabeth had on John as she believed he was still seeing his mistress, Abigail Williams. This follows on to the lack of trust which will eventually lead on to John was indulging in fornication and his marriage to Elizabeth was falling apart, but the whole time from when Abigail started the lies, this began their time of purification. His confession of adultery brings him to his salvation, as he regretted what he did.

A crucible is something you pass through for purification. John achieved this as even though he died he is restored and saved just like his marriage and all the other people in Salem. John Proctor is brought to his salvation with his marriage refined, free of falsity. Also both the town and the marriage have to sacrifice something, Proctor sacrifices himself in order to save his pregnant wife and the townspeople also sacrifice themselves.